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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT SATURDAY, June 10, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "CALL FOR COTTON." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Cotton has always been popular for summer clothes. One reason probably is that so many cottons have been cool fabrics. Another reason is that so many have been inexpenisve to buy. And a third reason is that many cottons have been "wash fabrics." So cotton has often been the mainstay of the summer wardrobe. For house dresses, aprons, work clothes, sports clothes, and children's garments, cotton has always been the favorite.

But up until this year, the fashion experts haven't given cotton a great deal of attention. They've just taken cotton for granted as a good practical fabric for summer use. And most other people have felt the same way about it. What I mean is that in past years you probably wouldn't have chosen a cotton gown to wear to meet the King and Queen of England. Or if your uncle had died and left you a million to spend on clothes, you probably wouldn't have gone out and bought yourself a lot of ginghams and seersuckers.

But this summer it's different. Cotton has gone to town. It's no longer the Cinderella among fabrics. It's out with royalty. Paris models this spring came out in cotton. And stores in the larger cities are selling cotton evening dresses for as much as 75 or 85 dollars. This summer cotton is high style.

And that's good news, especially for the home dressmaker. Many cottons are still inexpensive. And if you're clever with your needle, you can often make at home for very little money cotton dresses like many that are selling in the stores

for top-notch prices.

If you've looked at the cotton fabrics selling in the stores this season, you'll notice other changes that have come over cotton. Cotton used to shrink. Cotton used to wrinkle. Cotton used to fade. Some cheap cotton used to look like a dish-rag after the first laundering. Every time you bought goods for a cotton dress you had to allow for shrinkage. And then you had to shrink it at home before you cut out the pattern. Then, unless you went to the bother of adding starch to the fabric every time you washed, your cotton dresses were likely to look limp and wan. What's more, once upon a time you had to watch out for trouble with the color in the dress when it was washed. Not all colors ran or faded but some of them did.

But considerable change has come over cotton. Many cotton fabrics have improved. The manufacturers have been trying to overcome the shortcomings of the old time cotton fabrics.

Today many cotton fabrics are pre-shrunk. And some of the cotton fabrics that used to wrinkle so badly.....the voiles and the organdies, for example..... have wrinkle-resistant finishes. The new finishes gives body and luster to the fabric even after laundering.

Miss Clarice Scott of the Bureau of Home Economics has been making a collection of the newer and better cotton fabrics, and has some suggestions for home dressmakers who are making hot-weather clothes these days.

For street or office wear in town, or for sports wear in the country, count on gingham, she suggests. Ginghams are both smart and practical. They have come out in all sorts of new colors and patterns. You can buy Scotch plaid gingham in the familiar bright red, blue, black or green that most of us have known so well in wool fabrics. Then there are many new ginghams in stripes and checks with unusual color combinations. Green and yellow for example, and pink and blue together. You can also get plain-color ginghams to match stripes or checks. So you can have

a striped waist and a plain skirt for your sports dress. Or a plain waist and a striped skirt. This is the year when it's the fashion to mix things up that way.

As for price, though some of the imported English ginghams run a little higher, most gingham this year costs less than 50 cents a yard and has generous width.

Another favorite old-fashioned cotton that is stepping out this year is seersucker. Seersucker is going everywhere. It's being used in long evening dresses, short afternoon dresses, street and office clothes, play suits, bathing suits and so on. Seersucker is an excellent fabric to take on a vacation trip because it doesn't show wrinkles. And you can wash it out at night and have it ready to wear first thing in the morning. No ironing or pressing necessary. By the way, when you're buying seersucker, be sure it's firmly woven. Test by stretching the material with your hands. See that it hasn't too much "give," and that it springs back in place.

Another all-around cotton fabric is cotton lace. This year the stores are showing cotton lace for morning, afternoon, and evening. Street dresses are made of cotton lace. So are summer coats. So are afternoon and evening dresses. Cotton lace is cool because it's "ventilated." It comes in a great variety of colors. It washes well and irons easily. And you can buy it in both thin and thick weaves.

Among the new crease-resistant fabrics this season, you'll find voiles, crash, pique, gingham and a new shantung-like cotton broadcloth for sports. But before you buy, make sure that the fabric you want has this crease-resistant finish. Not all cottons have it. Other points to check on are shrinkage and color-fastness as well as price and width and general appearance. When you buy ready-made clothes, you can check on many of these points by reading the label. But when you buy yard goods, read the print on the end of the bolt, or on the tags hanging to the bolts. And always ask and ask again before you buy.

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